Faculty of Music
University of Toronto

thursday evening series

XAVIER DARASSE, ORGAN

Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building
February 26, 1976 at 8:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Prelude and Fugue in C minor	BWV 546
Choral "Allein Gott"	BWV 662
Toccata and Fugue in D Minor	BWV 565
Choral "Allein Gott"	BWV 663

INTERMISSION

Toccata and Fugue in D Minor "Dorienne"	BWV 538
Fantasy in G Major	BWV 572
Prelude and Fugue in E Minor	BWV 548

The organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach are generally thought to have been the output of three major periods of his life's employment.

The earlier Lünenberg and Mülhausen period (1700-1708), the Weimar and Cöthen period (1708-1723), and the Leipzig 'master' period (1723-1750).

The last ten years might be called a period of revision, for from this time Bach seems to have rethought some earlier works, refining and extending them.

Having published his Clavierübung III, the Six 'Schübler' Chorales, and the Canonic Variations, Bach was in the process of editing a collection to become known as the Eighteen Chorales or Leipzig Chorales when death overtook him.

The chorale melody "Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr" must have held special significance for Bach as there are ten known settings of it for the organ alone, of which three are to be found in the collection of eighteen.

The first setting to be heard (BWV 662) places the cantus firmus in the soprano voice over a richly textured three part accompaniment, at times heavily ornamented, and employing Lombardic rhythmic figures of great serenity.

The second setting is the only composition by Bach in which he places a florid cantus firmus in the tenor.

The influence of Buxtehude is strongly suggested in the earlier Toccata (BWV 565). With its whirling rhetoric and abundant flamboyancy, we have a unique example of the youthful but maturing Bach not to be found in the later Toccata (BWV 538).

This work is more closely woven and more organically structured, suggesting a movement in the style of the Italian Concerto Grosso and, incidentally, Bach's only original work in which his own directions for changes of manual have been noted.

The contrast between the two accompanying fugues shows the composer's increasing concern for a more profound scholarship in developing his textures.

While the earlier fugue could be said to display much more in terms of free episode than fugal exposition, the mature fugue employs more serious subject material with two counter-subjects and multipule stretti, resulting in Bach's longest organ fugue (222 Measures). As in the Toccata, there are seven sections of which four are principal and three subordinate. The fugue subject can be derived from the opening figure of the respective Toccata in each case.

From the Leipzig period there are five great preludes and fugues for the organ. Two of these, the C Minor (BWV 546) and the E Minor (BWV 548) have much in common. Both could be said to be constructed in the Italian Concerto Grosso style of contrasting Tutti and Soli. Each has a pedal point over which the opening statement is presented, and the scheme of modulation is identical. (Tonic-Dominant-Sub-Dominant-Tonic).

The C Minor prelude is thought to have replaced an earlier prelude and as a result the fugue does not perhaps reach the same height of inspiration. The E Minor fugue falls into three clearly stated sections. The third being an exact repetition of the first.

The Northern German school of organ playing did not produce anything to compare with or resemble the Fantasy in G Major (BWV 572). A manual Toccata, a five part "Gravement" movement in the Southern polyphonic tradition concluding with another manual flourish which is truly an embellishment of a five part harmonic pattern over a chromatically descending pedal scale compassing one complete octave.

—Douglas Bodle

Next Event: Saturday, March 6, 1976 at 8:30 p.m.
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Next Thursday Evening Series: March 18, 1976 at 8:30 p.m.
EARLY MUSIC CONSORT
from London